

Finding our hostages and bringing them home is not a partisan issue. I love Paul Whelan and his family. We introduced legislation passed by the House that said to bring Brittney Griner home and bring Paul Whelan home.

I am happy for Cherelle, Brittney's mother and father, Houston, Phoenix, the Nation, and all the players in the WNBA, but we will continue to use the power of the sovereign United States to bring Paul Whelan home, as we did Trevor Reed and as we did those who came from Venezuela.

Let us unify together. Let us celebrate Brittney and fight to bring Paul Whelan home.

DARK DAYS OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and still I rise.

At this time, prior to going into my message, I yield such time as he may consume to the Honorable MARK TAKANO, the pride of California's 41st District and the chair of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

THANKING TORIA SULLIVAN

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for his generous yield.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank a member of my staff on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs who will not be continuing with us into the next Congress.

Toria Sullivan brought a deep passion for helping veterans to my committee and always provided a kind and empathetic ear to those who contacted our office seeking assistance.

She brought calm and order to a fast-moving office, where the next urgent priority was always right around the corner. She was unfailingly helpful and went above and beyond expectations as part of the committee's communications team.

The work of my committee, this Congress, and our government to honor and support our veterans was made better by Toria's service, and she will be deeply missed.

THANKING HEATHER O'BEIRNE KELLY

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank a member of my staff on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs who will not be continuing with us into the next Congress.

Dr. Heather O'Beirne Kelly brought 20 years of experience as a psychologist to her critical role with the Health Subcommittee. She spearheaded my committee's work on veterans' mental health and suicide prevention and drafted key portions of some of the most important legislation passed by the committee, including the Veterans

COMPACT Act, the STRONG Veterans Act, and the VIPER Act.

Even as she grappled with incredibly difficult policy challenges, Heather was a joyful presence in our office who made every day better for her coworkers.

The work of my committee, this Congress, and our government to honor and support our veterans was made better by Heather's service, and she will be deeply missed.

THANKING ESTI LAMONACA

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank a member of my staff on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs who will not be continuing with us into the next Congress.

Esti Lamonaca is an Army veteran who lives and breathes veterans advocacy and who brought deep insight and tireless passion to the committee's efforts to support women veterans.

As the lead for the Women Veterans Task Force during this Congress, Esti organized a series of important task force events. The oversight work they undertook will guide the committee's work on behalf of women veterans for years to come, and Esti's commitment to this work will continue to inspire those who worked with them.

The work of my committee, this Congress, and our government to honor and support our veterans was made better by Esti's service, and they will be deeply missed.

THANKING MATT TYRELL

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank a member of my staff on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs who will not be continuing with us into the next Congress.

Matt Tyrell came to our committee from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and his experience within that organization proved invaluable to our work. He spent months engaging with stakeholders, drafting language, and laying the careful groundwork needed to pass the Honoring our PACT Act, one of the most important pieces of legislation to come out of this Congress. Even while accomplishing such a Herculean task, he never failed to bring collegiality and good humor to his work.

The work of my committee, this Congress, and our government to honor and support our veterans was made better by Matt's service, and he will be deeply missed.

THANKING PETER TYLER

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank a member of my staff on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs who will not be continuing with us into the next Congress.

Peter Tyler is a former member of the Navy Reserve and an experienced Hill staffer who brought considerable skill and oversight experience to my committee. He led many of our efforts to make the Veterans Administration a welcoming place for all who served our Nation and to protect veterans and their families from abusive debt collec-

tion practices by improving administrative processes at the VA.

Peter's passion for good government shone through in every task he took on for the committee.

The work of my committee, this Congress, and our government to honor and support our veterans was made better by Peter's service, and he will be deeply missed.

THANKING MATT HOROWITZ

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank a member of my staff on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs who will not be continuing with us into the next Congress.

Matt Horowitz brought real-world experience in technology and cybersecurity to my committee's work and broadened the scope of our oversight efforts into this important, complex, and often overlooked area.

His deep knowledge, patience, and good humor also helped my committee become a model to others as Congress adjusted to the need for remote work and virtual hearings during the pandemic. He expanded the work the committee does and helped us do it better during a very challenging time.

The work of my committee, this Congress, and our government to honor and support our veterans was made better by Matt's service, and he will be deeply missed.

THANKING JOEL WALSH

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank a member of my staff on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs who will not be continuing with us into the next Congress.

Joel Walsh has been an important part of my committee's oversight and investigations team, and he brought skills to his job that he honed while working as a journalist. His professionalism, writing and investigation skills, and work ethic proved invaluable to the committee as he helped lead hearings and draft important records.

Joel's sincerity and good humor made my committee a better place to work and also made our work better.

The work of my committee, this Congress, and our government to honor and support our veterans was made better by Joel's service, and he will be deeply missed.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for his generosity of spirit and for his collegiality.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and still I rise, a proud, liberated Democrat, unbought, unbossed, and unafraid to speak truth to power as well as truth about power concerning the topic of slavery and the need for atonement.

Let's start with slavery and identify it for what it was. A proper identification of slavery would cause one to conclude that it was truly one of the greatest crimes ever committed against humanity.

Slavery was kidnapping. People were stolen from their homes. They were traversed across the oceans.

Slavery was murder because in the process of transferring persons, if they became unruly, unmanageable, they could simply be thrown overboard into the shark-infested waters. In fact, it is said that sharks would follow the ships knowing that, at some point, a body might be thrown over that they could feed upon.

Slavery was robbery. People had their identities stolen from them. People were put in a position such that they could not know who they were in terms of their connection to the past, and they could not get an education about what the world was all about.

Slavery was rape. It was not unusual for the masters to rape the women. It was not unusual for them to father the children, and then for those children to become slaves.

Slavery was about the enslavement of babies. What kind of people would do such a dastardly thing as to enslave babies?

The people who would do this were the people who didn't see the human beings, the human qualities associated with slavery. They just saw them as chattel, something to be traded, something to be used, and something to be discarded.

Slavery was also about forced labor. I would like to say more about this topic of forced labor and slavery because I happen to have the good fortune to be the chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Financial Services Committee.

I serve under the leadership of the Honorable MAXINE WATERS, who is one of the most courageous Members of Congress. Under her leadership, we have had hearings on this question of slavery and how this slavery, this evil, has impacted not only the people of that time when they were enslaved but also the people of this time.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very sensitive topic, and it deserves our attention. For those who desire not to give it attention, there are places for them to have their conversations off the floor. I beg that they would do so. It is a very sensitive topic.

□ 1430

We have held hearings on this topic, and at these hearings we have discovered that there are institutions that have a historical connection to slavery. These institutions include our mega banks. I will call them "big banks." They include mega insurance companies. I will call them "big insurance companies."

These mega banks, these big banks, these big insurance companies have predecessor institutions, predecessor banks and insurance companies, that actually engaged in the slave trade by way of with banks insuring slaves as chattel, and the insurance companies would insure them, and the banks would make loans against slaves as chattel.

Let me give some examples. One big bank had a predecessor bank that was

found to have had a connection to chattel slavery by accepting 8,149 enslaved people as collateral for loans and coming into possession of 437 enslaved people.

Another predecessor bank accepted approximately 13,000 enslaved people as collateral for loans as well as took possession of approximately 1,250 enslaved people upon default.

Mr. Speaker, it might be worthy of noting that these predecessor banks were located in our State. I was born in Louisiana. You represent a great Congressional District in Louisiana. Predecessor banks that took possession of approximately 1,250 enslaved people upon default on loans.

Another predecessor bank made a loan of \$135,000 to a railroad company to use slave labor. Adjusted for inflation, \$135,000 is worth approximately \$4,776,840 in 2022.

Another predecessor bank accepted enslaved people as collateral in at least 24 transactions, took possession of enslaved people upon default on loans, and engaged in business and investments with the Confederacy that by 1862 exceeded \$1.5 million. That amount is worth \$44,000,230 in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, as a proud descendent of enslaved people, I cannot in good conscience allow these transgressions to go unchallenged, to allow them to continue without atonement. There are some things that we ought not allow to remain a part of our history without proper redress. The enslavement of people and the profits that were made off of these people as slaves is something that must be redressed. These big banks and these big insurance companies have a duty, responsibility, and an obligation to atone for their connectivity to slavery.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, I plan to file a big banks' and big insurance companies' atonement legislation, a piece of legislation that will address the injustices that were perpetrated upon human beings, the greatest crime against humanity, that we call slavery.

This piece of legislation will require these big banks to assess whether their institutions, their predecessor institutions had direct or indirect ties to or profited from the institution of slavery. We already know that some did. They will have to issue a report containing all findings and determinations made in carrying out the assessments required, and to the extent the institutions, these big banks and these big insurance companies, identify ties to or profits from the institution of slavery a disclosure of the steps these institutions have taken to reconcile such profits and ties shall be reported. This report will be made available to the public, including on a website of each of the institutions making the reports.

Further, this legislation will require a fine to be imposed on any institution that fails to issue a report as required or that reports false, misleading, or inaccurate information on such a report. They shall be fined \$20,000 per day until

the report is issued properly or until the report is corrected to not be false, misleading, or inaccurate.

Mr. Speaker, this is a part of the process necessary for great a nation—and ours is a great nation—to be an even greater nation after it has properly reconciled for its greatest sin, its seminal sin of slavery; as I have indicated one of the greatest crimes ever committed against humanity, a crime that has implications on this very day and will have implications on tomorrow in a very negative way.

We still have people who are suffering from these crimes that were committed centuries ago. Slavery didn't end all of the suffering. After slavery we had Black codes, which allowed Black people to be arrested and then forced to work as persons who were leased. It was called "convict leasing." You could be arrested for something as simple as not having a job and then forced to work. Many people worked until they died; literally, they would work them to death.

In Texas we have discovered a grave of 95 such people known as the Sugar Land 95, a common grave with persons who were slave laborers.

It didn't end there. It went on to have persons who were discriminated against lawfully in this country because we had segregation. Segregation was another means of maintaining people of African ancestry as second-class citizens, people who were not entitled to the same privileges and opportunities as others.

But it didn't end there. We then suffered from—and still to this day—suffered from invidious discrimination. Yes, there are some people who say that it doesn't exist, but it does. There is invidious discrimination in the House of Representatives. Invidious discrimination, discrimination that keeps people from reaching their potential because of who they happen to be.

In fact, our failure to recognize marriage as we have voted to do so today was a form of invidious discrimination.

So it doesn't just consume people of African ancestry. I am making that the topic today. On some future occasion I will be talking about the invidious discrimination perpetrated against others, but today as it relates to African Americans there is still invidious discrimination in our country.

African Americans were not given the same opportunities to acquire wealth. Over the centuries, we have had circumstances where in this country you could acquire wealth by simply going out in the West and fencing in as much property as you could, buy a Winchester rifle, defend it, and it was yours. You could simply squat and acquire land. People of African ancestry were not given the opportunity to acquire land in this fashion.

When the GI Bill was passed, many people benefited from it. Very few of them were of African ancestry. People who fought, many of them died, but

people who fought and survived and came back could not get the same loans, the same grants, the same opportunities as others. So the opportunity to build wealth has been denied, and that opportunity denied has manifested in a wealth gap that is unimaginable with Black people having pennies on the dollar for the many dollars that White people have in terms of wealth.

This wealth gap is something that cannot be ignored, and atonement has to be a methodology by which we achieve a bringing together, a closing of the wealth gap, if you will. And until we close the wealth gap we have to continue to require atonement.

Now, there are many people who conclude that atonement and just talking about slavery is something that ought to be against the law.

In the State of Texas they have in our legislature imposed a law that as many read it would not allow teaching the truth about slavery in schools. There are people who don't want their children to be harmed by hearing about the suffering that people in this country had perpetuated upon them for centuries. They don't want their children to know. They want their children to believe that liberty and justice for all has always applied to all of the people in the country, and it hasn't. They want their children to believe that there has always been equal access to opportunity in this country, which is not true. They don't want their children taught the truth, but the truth is going to be told and taught. The truth will be known. Carlyle was right: "No lie can live forever." William Cullen Bryant was right: "Truth, crushed to Earth, shall rise again." Dr. King was right: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

The truth will be told. You can't hide it from your children. They need to know the truth. It is only after the truth is known that we can then reconcile and have an even greater country than we have today.

The process of reconciliation requires atonement, and for this process of reconciliation I have legislation pending to have a department of reconciliation, a department with a secretary of reconciliation with undersecretaries of reconciliation who will have the responsibility to wake up each and every day and deal with the racial wealth gap, deal with the invidious discrimination that took place against persons who came here and built the railroads, persons of Asian ancestry, the invidious discrimination that took place with the Trail of Tears when people were forced to leave their homes, move across the country, and dwell in a foreign place as it related to them, and the invidious discrimination to deal with the Latino population that many years ago had land taken from them.

Yes, we need a department of reconciliation. I have the legislation for such a department.

But notwithstanding that, we still need this legislation to deal with the

atonement of these big financial institutions that have profited from the labor of human beings who were treated as chattel.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I say every word that I have said today because I am the proud descendant of these humble hands that helped build this Capitol, the proud descendant of these humble hands that helped build the roads and bridges, laid the foundation for this country. They were the foundational mothers and fathers of this country. I am proud to be a descendant of the enslaved people who helped make America great. I am proud to say that I think these enslaved people who helped make America great deserve more than being reviled while the people who tried to maintain slavery are revered—the Confederacy—revered by this House of Representatives.

□ 1445

Slavery reviled. The slaves reviled.

Why do I say that the Confederacy was revered or is revered or has been revered by this House?

Because this House of Representatives granted a Congressional Gold Medal to Confederate soldiers. Some things bear repeating. The House of Representatives in this Chamber passed legislation to accord a Congressional Gold Medal to Confederate soldiers. We revere the enslavers and revere the enslaved.

That hasn't changed. This Congress or the next should accord a Congressional Gold Medal to the enslaved people who built this country. If we could do it for the enslavers, then we can do it for the enslaved.

I will have legislation before this House to allow each and every person to go on RECORD as to whether you have the courage and the intestinal fortitude necessary to set the record straight, to do the right thing—no, more importantly—to do the righteous thing: give the people who built this country the same recognition that you gave to the people who would keep them in chains.

My dear brothers and sisters will have an opportunity. We will find out whether you put principle above politics or whether you are going to put the Confederacy above the enslaved. We will find out.

I assure you; the RECORD will be made known. We will know who voted for and who voted against.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we will file this legislation. We will give Members an opportunity to demonstrate where they stand.

Dr. King was right: The truest measure of the person is not where you stand in times of comfort and convenience when all is well in your world. The truest measure of the person is where do you stand in times of great challenge and controversy?

I plan to bring the time of challenge to the floor of the House.

The question is: Where will the Members of this great House stand?

Will Members have the courage to accord a Congressional Gold Medal to the enslaved persons?

Will Members have the courage to pass a resolution asking for a department of reconciliation?

Will Members have the courage to vote for legislation to require these megabanks and mega-insurance companies to atone for their connectivity to the greatest crime committed against humanity?

We will find out because the legislation will be presented.

Mr. Speaker, let me close with this: Notwithstanding all that I have said, I still love my country. I still pledge allegiance to the flag, and I still sing the national anthem. I still support those who choose not to say the pledge of allegiance and refuse to sing the national anthem. But I do it because I believe in the Constitution. I believe in the words liberty and justice for all as extolled in the pledge of allegiance. I believe that we can be a country of the people, by the people, and for all of the people.

I believe these things in spite of the fact that my country hasn't always loved me as much as I love it. I just celebrated my 25th birthday for the third time, and my country hasn't always loved me as much as I love my country.

My country required me to drink from colored water fountains, Mr. Speaker. My country required me to sit in the back of the bus and to sit in the balcony of movies. My country required me to go to back doors and get my food. My country required me to step off the sidewalk when other persons of a different hue passed.

I still love my country. I am standing here today because I love my country, and I want my country to live up to the promise made in the Declaration of Independence and the promise made in the Constitution.

I want America to be America for all Americans, and until that day, I will still love my country, but I will remain a liberated Democrat, unbought, unbossed, and unafraid to speak truth to power and truth about power.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

FAREWELL TO CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. KELLER. Mr. Speaker, reflecting on my time in Congress and in the